

# Capsule sponge

## A method of cell collection from the oesophagus with the use of a sponge attached to a string

This information sheet provides essential information to prepare you for your forthcoming procedure. You have been advised to have a **capsule sponge** to help find the cause of your symptoms. This sheet covers frequently asked questions.

### What is capsule sponge?

You have been referred for investigations to understand your current symptoms, or a follow-up of an existing condition. Capsule sponge is being offered to help identify patients who may require further investigations, such as endoscopy (a test with a camera to examine your gullet and stomach).

A capsule sponge is a small capsule on a string. The capsule is a similar size to a vitamin tablet and is made from vegan gelatine. The capsule contains a sponge which is designed to collect a sample of cells from your oesophagus (gullet). This will then be tested to find out if there are any cells which are unexpected or abnormal.

Problems with heartburn and acid reflux are very common but occasionally this can lead to changes in the normal cells that line your oesophagus. Very rarely these cells can develop into pre-cancerous or cancerous cells and may lead to oesophageal cancer (cancer of the gullet). When changes to cells are found early it can make any treatment much simpler and the impact on a patient is much less significant. A capsule sponge test can help your doctor investigate and manage your symptoms.

### Before your test appointment

You should keep taking all your usual medications.

- **If you have diabetes**, please make sure your appointment is not a late morning appointment as you cannot eat or drink for 4 hours before your appointment. If you have any questions about the test or find that you cannot keep your appointment, please contact the clinic using the contact details on your capsule sponge referral letter.
- **Blood thinning medicines** - If you take Warfarin you will need to have an INR test 7 days before your capsule sponge test. Your INR has to be 3.5 or less when you have the capsule sponge test.
  - If your INR is within your target range, then continue with your usual dose.
  - If your INR is not within your target range, please contact your anticoagulant clinic for advice as your dose may need to be adjusted.

- **Antiplatelet medication** - Clopidogrel, aspirin, prasugrel, ticagrelor and other antiplatelet medication do not need to be stopped before your capsule sponge test.
- **Other anticoagulants** - you should stop any other anticoagulants the day of your capsule sponge test, e.g. Rivaroxaban, Apixaban, Edoxaban, Dabigatran.

Restart your medication the day after your capsule sponge test and continue with your usual dose.

## On the day of your test

- You should have **nothing to eat** up to **4 hours before** your appointment, and **nothing to drink** up to **2 hours** before your appointment.
- Take your medication as normal, but with only a little water. Please bring a list of your medications with you to your appointment.
- **If you have diabetes, please have a light breakfast early in the morning and take your usual medication.**
- Remember to bring your consent form unsigned.

## At the hospital or clinic

Please arrive on time for your appointment so that we can manage the number of patients in the clinic. Please do not arrive early for your appointment. Your appointment will last around 30 minutes. If you have any questions when you arrive, please ask your nurse when you are admitted.

## What happens during the test?

1. You will be collected from the waiting room by one of the nursing team who will take you to the clinic area.
2. You will be asked some questions to check that you are ready for your test and make sure you are comfortable.
3. The nurse will confirm your consent to the procedure, and you will be asked to sign your consent form.
4. You will swallow the capsule sponge and string with some water. It will take around 7 minutes for the capsule to dissolve and the sponge will expand.
5. The nurse will pull the sponge up by the string. This will only take 1 or 2 seconds and should not be painful, but you will be aware of a tugging sensation in your chest and back of your throat, and you may feel like the inside of your gullet is being brushed. The sponge collects cells as it passes through your gullet.
6. After your test, experts will look at the sample to see if you have any signs of changes to the cells in the oesophagus (gullet).

You will be given the option to have a local anaesthetic spray into your throat which will numb the area before the sponge is removed. If you choose to have a local anaesthetic spray, the nurse will first make sure you do not have any allergies, and that you are not taking any medication that would cause this to be a problem.

## After your test

### You can go home straight after your test is completed.

- If you have had a local anaesthetic spray, this causes a numbing in your throat which will soon go away. For safety reasons you will be advised not to eat or drink for 20-30 minutes or until your throat feels back to normal.
- If you have a sore throat after the test, suck a throat lozenge or sweet and take simple painkillers like paracetamol if required.
- If your heartburn symptoms become worse, you should continue to take heartburn medication as prescribed.

It is very unlikely you will experience any other symptoms, however if you experience any severe pain or bleeding you should contact the clinic using the contact details on your referral letter. Outside normal opening times, please call 111 and tell them that you have had a capsule sponge test.

## How will you get your results?

The results of your test will be given to you either by telephone or by letter. We expect this to take around 3-6 weeks following your procedure. You may also be sent an outpatient appointment to discuss your results.

If your capsule sponge test shows your cells are normal, this indicates that there is no evidence of damage to the oesophagus and you will continue with treatment, such as acid-suppressants for your symptoms.

If the capsule sponge test identifies any abnormal cells, this indicates that there is some damage to the oesophagus which will require further investigation with an endoscopy.

## Potential risks

- The capsule sponge test has not been found to have any serious side effects.
- Most people do not have any problem swallowing the capsule but if you do have a problem, we will not continue with the test.
- You may have a mild sore throat which might last up to 48 hours after the test.
- There is an extremely small risk (less than 1 in 2000) that the string may become detached from the sponge, or it may be difficult to remove the sponge. If this happens it is not painful or dangerous, but you will have an endoscopy to remove the sponge.
- There is a very small chance that you may experience bleeding and this may be more likely if you are on blood thinning medication. If you spit up a small amount of pink saliva there is no need to worry, but if you vomit fresh blood go to the Emergency Department.

**To ensure that your examination is a success, please follow all the instructions carefully.**

- **Diet and fluids** - You can take a light snack up to **4 hours** before your appointment time, and fluids up to **2 hours** before your appointment time.
- Please wear loose, comfortable and washable clothing.
- If you are taking any **anti-coagulation therapy**, please inform the nurse on the triage telephone consultation.

## Please tick the checklist below to ensure you have read all the information and are ready for your procedure:

I have read this patient information sheet

☐

I have understood the information provided

☐

I have read the consent form (if given/sent one)

☐

I am aware of when I should stop eating and drinking

☐

I have contacted the diabetes nurse (if required)

☐

I have contacted the anticoagulant clinic (if required)

☐

I have contacted the nurses with any queries

☐

**If you are unsure about anything, please contact us.**

**Your procedure could be cancelled if you have not followed the instructions properly.**

## Additional information

To view the Lister and New QEII site maps for navigating your way around our hospitals, please visit our Trust website - [www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)

## Useful contact details

### East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust:

- Website [www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk)
- Telephone 01438 314333

### Endoscopy Unit - Lister:

- Telephone 01438 288603 - Option 1

### Capsule Sponge Nurses' Enquiry Line:

- Telephone 01438 286430

### Diabetic Specialist Nurses:

- Telephone 01438 284560 / 284645 / 284615

**This is not an emergency service. Messages left on the answerphone may not be answered for 24-48hrs.**

## Leaflet information

**You can request this information in a different format or another language; please speak to your doctor or nurse.**



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